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Department of Defense
DIRECTIVE

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ASD(SO/LIC)

SUBJECT: Special Operations Forces (SOF) Foreign Language Policy

References: (a) Sections 136 and 167 of title 10, United States Code
(b) DoD Directive 5111.1, "Under Secretary of Defense for Policy," July 14, 1992
(c) DoD Directive 5160.41, "Defense Language Program (DLP)," April 7, 1988
(d) AR 350-20/OPNAVINST 1550.7B/AFR 50-40/MC Order 1550.4D,
"Management of the Defense Foreign Language Program," March 15, 1987

A. PURPOSE

This Directive:

1. Specifies that, for specifically identified units, foreign language proficiency is either an explicit or implied component of principal SOF missions or collateral activities under reference (a).
2. Stipulates that proficiency in foreign language may be a contributing criteria for assignment within SOF organizations. Language-specific positions shall be identified on organizational documents and managed by Military Service personnel offices.
3. Supports other DoD efforts to bring language proficiency pay more in line with other U.S. governmental programs.
4. Establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes procedures.

B. APPLICABILITY

This Directive applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Unified and Specified Commands, the Defense Agencies, and the DoD Field Activities (hereafter referred to collectively as "the DoD Components"). The term "Military Services," as used herein, refers to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps.

C. DEFINITIONS

Terms used in this Directive are defined in enclosure 1.

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D. POLICY

The DoD policies regarding foreign language proficiency requirements for selected SOF organizations, including Reserve components, are based on the determination that foreign language skills are essential to the conduct of their missions and collateral activities.

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Accordingly, it is DoD policy that:

1. Selected SOF organizations shall maintain language proficiency at levels appropriate to conducting these missions and activities effectively.
2. Selected SOF organizations shall train and maintain sufficient linguists to satisfy the SOF requirements identified by the DoD Components.
3. Foreign language proficiency shall be an element of readiness for SOF units having foreign language requirements.

E. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, as the Principal Staff Assistant and civilian advisor to the Secretary of Defense for policy and resources related to Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict activities within the Department of Defense, shall, consistent with DoD Directive 5111.1(reference (b)):

- a. Establish and coordinate policy within the Department of Defense for SOF foreign language requirements consistent with DoD Directive 5160.41 (reference (c)).
- b. Monitor compliance with this Directive.

2. The Heads of the DoD Components concerned shall:

- a. Study, identify, and forward SOF foreign language requirements and proficiencies necessary to support operational needs to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command (CINCSOC).
- b. Create, implement, and maintain personnel programs and policies supporting the recruiting, training, assignment, and professional development of language-qualified SOF personnel.

3. The Commander in Chief, United States Special Operations Command, shall:

- a. Validate SOF language requirements and proficiencies necessary to support operational requirements identified by the Heads of the DoD Components.
- b. Establish policies, programs, procedures, and controls to manage SOF language readiness responsive to the objectives and responsibilities in section D., above.
- c. Maintain SOF language requirements, based on input from the Heads of the DoD Components and other appropriate agencies. Provide language training requirements to Military Services for inclusion in the Service Defense Language Institute annual training program.
- d. Monitor the assignment of language-qualified SOF personnel to foreign language-designated positions.

- e. Monitor SOF readiness in foreign language proficiency.
- f. Propose, initiate, and maintain readiness reporting on foreign language proficiency for SOF organizations directed to establish and maintain language-designated positions.
- g. Plan, conduct, evaluate, or monitor directed or coordinated exercises requiring SOF foreign language use.

F. PROCEDURES

- 1. The Heads of the DoD Components, and other agencies as applicable, shall identify foreign language requirements and proficiency levels necessary to support Active and Reserve component SOF missions and activities within the theater, and provide this information to the USCINCSOC every 2 years.
- 2. Foreign language proficiencies identified at or beyond the 3 level, as defined by Appendix F. of the joint Service regulation (reference (d)), require justification related to mission requirements.
- 3. Language and proficiency requirements for the Active and Reserve component SOF shall be updated every 2 years and forwarded to the Military Services by the USCINCSOC for inclusion into the Defense Language Institute annual training program.
- 4. The USCINCSOC shall identify the SOF organizational positions that require foreign language proficiency and specify the level of proficiency required to support requirements identified by Unified Commanders.

G. EFFECTIVE DATE AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 1. This Directive is effective immediately.
- 2. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict may issue such instructions as may be necessary to implement this Directive. Instructions to the Military Departments shall be issued through the Secretaries of the Military Departments. Instructions to the Unified and Specified commands shall be communicated through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



Donald J. Atwood
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Enclosure
Definitions

DEFINITIONS

1. Language-Designated Positions. Theater CINC-identified and USCINCSOC-validated manning positions within SO organizations requiring a specified level of language competence on the part of the incumbent and upon which readiness assessments are periodically conducted.
2. Special Operations (SO). Operations conducted by specially trained, equipped, and organized DoD forces against strategic or tactical targets in pursuit of national military, political, economic, or psychological objectives. These operations may be conducted during periods of peace or hostilities. They may support conventional operations or they may be prosecuted independently when the use of conventional forces is either inappropriate or infeasible.
3. Special Operations Forces (SOF). Forces identified as Special Operations Forces pursuant to Section 167 (i) of title 10 of the U.S. Code (reference (a)).

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